

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. a system for facilitating the pickup and delivery of passengers and luggage across multiple service providers over a distributed network, comprising of:
 - a plurality of Service Provider sites connected to the distributed network, each Service Provider site running at least one service application to provide an online service to users over the distributed network;
 - a plurality of user computers connected to the distributed network, each user computer running at least one client application for accessing online service of the Service Provider sites;
 - a mySkyCap site connected to the plurality of Service Provider sites and user computers, the mySkyCap site including a traveler database, a luggage database, an itinerary database, a partner database, and a Open Travel Alliance database containing authentication information of registrants, the registered users accessing the Service Provider sites from the user computers over the distributed network;
 - a database which stores user specific customization data, the customization data specifying preferences of the registered users with respect to the online services of the Service Provider sites; and
 - a database which stores luggage identification information, the identification information including an RF chip, which uniquely identifies the luggage and associates it with an individual; and
 - a database which stores itinerary information, the itinerary information including individual travel segments, the travel segment being associated with a single service partner; and
 - a database which stores service partner information, the service partner information includes business rules and information unique to transportation entities such as airlines, car rentals, cruise ships, trains, buses, and shuttles; and
 - a database which stores Open Travel Alliance Information, the Open Travel Alliance Information contains business rules on how the alliance partners communicate with each other via the Internet.

an authentication protocol for allowing the mySkyCap site to authenticate users and service providers and communication links with the partner systems, the authentication protocol implemented by software components of the Service Provider, and mySkyCap sites.

whereby a scaleable system is defined that supports multiple online service providers of any size and from any location in the world.
2. A system as in claim 1, whereby an individual may schedule passenger and luggage handling services across multiple service providers.
3. A system as in claim 1, whereby an individual may schedule luggage pickup and delivery that is separate from passenger pickup and delivery.
4. A system as in claim 1, whereby luggage may be tracked as to its location.
5. A system as in claim 4, whereby security is increased by associating luggage with respective individuals.
6. A system as in claim 1, for the handling of luggage at airport and other similar facilities.

7. A system as in claim 1, whereby a traveler may obtain the status of travel reservations and luggage while in-route.
8. A system as in claim 1, whereby travelers may consolidate frequent flyer information from multiple companies and transportation modes.
9. A system whereby luggage may travel separately from the traveler but reach the same destination.
10. A method whereby registrants may consolidate multiple travel segment reservations into a single itinerary confirmation, comprising the steps of:
 Registrant visits mySkyCap site
 Registrant accesses their secure profile
 Registrant creates an skeleton itinerary
 Registrant adds one or more travel segments to the itinerary
 For each travel segment, Registrant optionally puts it out for bid to multiple service partners
 For each travel segment, Registrant requests a reservation at either the fixed cost or one of the bids
 For each travel segment, Service Provider either accepts or rejects Registrant's request
 Registrant confirms entire itinerary once all travel segments are reserved
 For each travel segment, a confirmation notice is sent to the appropriate Service Provider
 Registrant's account is charged appropriately
11. A method whereby registrants may put out a single travel segment for bid, comprising the steps of:
 Registrant views the appropriate travel segment
 Registrant selects two or more Service Providers for that travel segment
 Registrant indicates to the system that they would like to put it out for bid
 For each Service Provider selected, a Travel Reservation Bid Request is sent
 For each Service Provider selected, the system may or may not receive a Travel Reservation Bid Reply
12. An apparatus comprising:
 a mySkyCap server operatively connected to a computer network, the server having a processor and a computer readable memory, the memory storing mySkyCap and implementation software, including database management software, customer access software, payment processing software, and notification software;
 at least one data structure including a list of registrants along with corresponding ID and profile information, and including a list of participating service providers with their corresponding communication information, the list of participating service providers being a subset of the sites available to users of the computer network, the at least one data structure further including the registration of luggage;
 a first data entry system through which information about registrants are entered into the computer system, the first information for each registrant including at least a first name, last name, an e-mail address, which the registrant has been assigned a unique identifier;
 a second data entry system capable of receiving second information, the second information including a list of luggage associated with that user;